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SUBJECT: TIP: SAG COOPERATION INCREASES UNDERSTANDING OF
TRAFFICKING PATTERNS

REF: PRETORIA 4353

1. (SBU) The International Organization for Migration (IOM) released new information on trafficking patterns involving South Africa, based on information obtained following the increased awareness and cooperation of local law enforcement and non-governmental organizations. Overall, IOM has seen an increase in African victims and children (aged 13 to 18) seeking help through its victim assistance programs. The major African patterns are from Mozambique and Malawi to South Africa. China and Thailand are the major sources of victims from Asia, and Bulgarians dominate trafficking from Eastern Europe to South Africa. South Africa is also a source of trafficked women to Europe, Hong Kong, and Macau. West African syndicates are involved with the European pattern. The Triads control the traffic to Hong Kong and Macau. While this information confirms that South Africa has a trafficking problem, IOM's expanded knowledge of these patterns reflects the increased awareness and cooperation of law enforcement officials and local NGOs.

Introduction

2. (U) This is the second of two reports on the International Organization for Migration's October 20th briefing on trafficking in persons in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. Reftel described the increased cooperation IOM's anti-trafficking campaign is receiving from South African law enforcement, media, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This cable details information that IOM's ongoing research project has learned about trafficking patterns into and from South Africa, much of which was obtained as a result of this increased awareness and cooperation.

3. (U) IOM has been active in South Africa since 1999 and began researching trafficking within the SADC countries in 2002. According to IOM, at that time law enforcement throughout the region was aware of neither the nature of trafficking nor the scope of the problem. The results of IOM's research were published in a 2003 report, the first of its kind in the region, that was distributed to 30,000 people in three printings. IOM has since expanded its research program, meeting with NGOs that assist prostitutes and interviewing victims at IOM's shelters and when visiting brothels in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Harare.

4. (U) These continuing research efforts have shed new light on several distinct trafficking patterns involving South Africa as both a source and destination country. IOM is unable to estimate the numbers of victims involved in each pattern. However, IOM has seen an increase in the number of African victims seeking help through its victim assistance programs in South Africa. Most victims are aged between 21 and 35, but there is also an increase among child victims aged 13 to 18. Most of the false job offers used to entice African victims were for domestic and restaurant work. Details of the specific patterns discovered follow below.

Mozambique to South Africa

5. (SBU) IOM believes there are two major criminal operations, both involving South African men and Mozambican men and women, managing trafficking from Mozambique to South Africa. Recruitment uses two methods. First, victims are enticed with false job offers. Second, traffickers target female taxi passengers already traveling to South Africa. Border crossings are generally legal and follow two main taxi routes, the first going from Maputo to Komatipoort to Johannesburg, and the second from Maputo to Ponta d'Ouvre to Johannesburg or Durban. Once in South Africa, the victims are taken to safe houses in the Nkomazi area near the borders with Mozambique and Swaziland. Victims are informed of their true situation and intimidated (often involving rape). The victims are then sold to brothels for about 1,000 Rand (approximately 150 dollars), sold to rural men as wives for 650 Rand (approximately 100 dollars), or taken to housing

compounds to service mine workers.

Malawi to South Africa

16. (SBU) IOM thinks this pattern operates on a much smaller scale and is run by individual truck drivers rather than sophisticated criminal syndicates. The truck drivers recruit rural girls (generally aged 15-18) in Malawi with promises of education or jobs. The truckers frequently rape the victims in transit. Unlike the Mozambique pattern, border crossings are irregular and often illegal. Victims are usually delivered directly to South African buyers or sometimes pimped by the traffickers to other truckers.

Refugee Pattern

17. (SBU) This pattern is especially prevalent in Cape Town. Unemployed men with refugee status in South Africa turn to trafficking women from their home countries. The victims are usually female relatives who are promised jobs in South Africa. Borders are crossed using both legal and illegal means. The traffickers then register the victims with Home Affairs and complete applications for asylum to protect their investment from deportation. The victims are especially dependent on the traffickers given the family bonds. Victims are sexually initiated and intimidated by either the trafficker or customers from the same ethnic group. They are then put to work as street prostitutes, usually with a 250 Rand (approximately 40 dollars) nightly quota.

China to South Africa

18. (SBU) Most of the Chinese victims of trafficking in South Africa come from the southern provinces of Guangdong and Fujian. The traffickers are the "snake heads" who smuggle and traffic Chinese to the United States. As in the U.S., the victims arrive on planes in Johannesburg without travel documents. However, instead of requesting asylum like in the U.S., the victims voluntarily leave South Africa for Swaziland, Mozambique, or Lesotho. They then re-enter South Africa illegally through the land borders. Once in South Africa, the victims owe the snake heads 75 to 100 thousand Rand (approximately 12 to 15 thousand dollars) for travel expenses through a "debt bond." They are then intimidated into working the debt off as prostitutes. Most of the brothels involved in this pattern are reserved for Chinese customers from the local community or Chinese merchant sailors.

Thailand to South Africa

19. (SBU) Thais dominate among Asians seeking IOM's help in South Africa. The traffickers are often either previously trafficked women themselves or South African men, "pretty woman traffickers," who promise marriage. However, IOM believes these small scale traffickers are supported by Chinese triads and Thai organized crime groups. Most of the victims are between the ages of 25-35. As with the China pattern, the victims are debt bonded to the traffickers for 50 to 60 thousand Rand (approximately 7.5 to 9 thousand dollars). The traffickers then increase their profits further by selling or leasing the victims to brothels for 15 to 35 thousand Rand (approximately three to five thousand dollars). The victims are often imprisoned in safe houses managed by a Thai "mama san" when not at work. IOM has found this Thai pattern in both rural and urban areas in six South African provinces.

Eastern Europe to South Africa

110. (SBU) Bulgarians dominate the East Europeans IOM is seeing at shelters. The traffickers are usually members of either the Russian or Bulgarian mafias. The victims are generally educated but poor women who are recruited with phony waitress job offers. South African visas are fraudulently obtained in Russia. They are debt bonded for 12 to 15 thousand dollars. The traffickers are exceptionally violent and not only intimidate victims with rape and beatings, but also threaten the victims' families.

South Africa to Europe

111. (SBU) IOM identified the following pattern in Malawi, but has seen South African victims in Europe who were trafficked in the same manner. Professional women recruit

teenagers for work in Europe. The victims are given fraudulently obtained South African passports, which usually take two weeks to arrange. They are kept in safe houses while waiting to depart. The traffickers avoid the major international airports because of suspicious officials. Once in Europe the victims are sold, usually to a West African syndicate for 10 thousand dollars. As with the China pattern, the victims owe 40 thousand dollars for travel expenses, and the only way to pay off the traffickers is by agreeing to work as a prostitute.

South Africa to Hong Kong/Macau

¶12. (SBU) South African men with ties to both the local sex industry and the triads serve as recruiters for this pattern. They earn 500 dollars for each recruit. The victims are usually strippers or prostitutes in Johannesburg. As with Chinese trafficked to South Africa, victims owe a debt bond. They are sold to "saunas" in Macau and Hong Kong for 10 to 20 thousand dollars. The triads also get victims hooked on hard drugs to supplement intimidation with control.

Comment

¶13. (SBU) These patterns confirm that South Africa suffers from a significant trafficking problem. However, the depth of IOM's understanding of these patterns is a sign of progress. Many of the brothels IOM visits to collect information were first identified by South African law enforcement officers attending IOM's training sessions. This willingness of working level detectives to share information illustrates how ongoing training programs are increasing South African law enforcement's awareness of and capability to handle the trafficking problem (septel).

HARTLEY